

P-Jackson, Robert L.

OKd Mafia

CIA 1.03 Bissell, Richard

CIA 1.01 Dulles, Allen

CIA 1.03 Houston, Lawrence

CIA 8 Senate Select Ctte

CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATION

## BELIEVES DULLES RECEIVED REPORTS

# OKd Mafia Plan, Ex-CIA Aide Says

BY ROBERT L. JACKSON  
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—A former chief of clandestine services for the Central Intelligence Agency said Tuesday that he personally had approved CIA cooperation with Mafia figures who wanted to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in 1960.

Richard M. Bissell said also in an interview that he believed the late Allen Dulles, then director of the CIA, had received regular reports on the Mafia connection.

Bissell's statements marked the first time a former member of the CIA hierarchy had acknowledged responsibility for the unusual cooperation in the early 1960s between the underworld and intelligence planners.

Lawrence R. Houston, former general counsel of the CIA, told reporters

last week that he had first learned about the CIA-Mafia links in April, 1962, from the late Col. Sheffield Edwards, then the agency's director of security.

Houston said he had never authorized these arrangements and insisted that he and Edwards had immediately briefed Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy about them. Houston said he doubted that Edwards had acted alone in arranging the contacts.

Bissell, who was reached by telephone at his office in Farmington, Conn., said arrangements with the Mafia had been handled by Edwards' office through Robert A. Maheu.

Maheu, a former top aide to industrialist Howard Hughes, gave his first closed testimony to Senate CIA investigators Tuesday after being granted immunity from prosecution earlier this month. Maheu said that he would meet with reporters today if he completed his testimony.

Bissell said Edwards had arranged the highly secret cooperation with underworld figures Sam Giancana and Johnny Rosselli, but that he (Bissell)—who outranked Edwards—also approved it.

"Sheff Edwards talked to me about it," he said. "I approved of what he was doing."

Bissell said the Mafia work had not been under his personal direction, however. "In everything related to this matter, I believe Edwards reported directly to Dulles—with my knowledge and concurrence," Bissell said.

Bissell said these arrangements had begun "in the last half of 1960." They started in the waning months of the Eisenhower administration as plans were being made for Cuban expatriates to invade their homeland. These plans ended in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961, in the early days of the Kennedy administration.

Rosselli reportedly has told Senate investigators that he helped plan or direct about six attempts on Castro's life in the early 1960s.

When asked how cooperation with the Mafia had arisen Bissell said: "I think the history is very uncertain, as to whose original idea it was."

Giancana or other Mafia figures might have suggested it themselves, he said, because "they did have very large interests in Cuba that were totally eclipsed or destroyed by Castro."

"I believe the record shows that they worked (for the CIA) without pay for the most part," he said.

Other government sources have said that the Mafia wanted to remove Castro from power to reopen the lucrative gambling operations in Havana that Castro had closed.

Bissell speculated that underworld figures were also seeking to build up credit with the U.S. government against possible federal prosecutions in the future.

Bissell, a top planner of the Bay of Pigs invasion, left the CIA in February, 1962, during a Kennedy administration shakeup of the agency. He said he did not know how long work with the Mafia had continued,

although others have said that Rosselli's anti-Castro plans continued until 1963.

It was learned that Bissell had told Senate investigators he had known assassination plans would be made when he approved the Mafia cooperation but doubted that the Mafia could ever execute such plans. He told The Times he had "no clear recollection or hard evidence" that the White House or Atty. Gen. Kennedy knew about any such plans.

In a related development, Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.), vice chairman of the Senate's special CIA committee, said he had sounded out former President Richard M. Nixon Saturday about the possibility of Mr. Nixon providing testimony on several issues.

Toner said he had spoken with Mr. Nixon by telephone for 20 minutes but refused to disclose the response. Committee sources said the matter was unresolved.